

# CROP STATUS REPORT

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

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DOMESTIC SALES AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

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## REGION ONE

**Eastern Shore and Tidewater Areas**

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**OVERVIEW:** August has been the cruelest month for Eastern Virginia vegetable growers for many years, and this year that cruelty has been manifested with a month long drought. Spotty rains were helpful to a few producers, but many of our growers needed to irrigate in order to get their fall acreage planted. Since most of the vegetable acreage in our area is irrigated, acreage of most vegetables is little changed from last year. The absence of a hurricane or tropical storm was certainly a plus for the area. Acreage of major vegetable crops appears to be relatively unchanged from last year and like last year volume will increase as the season progresses and peaks in October.

**BEANS:** The fall harvest of snap beans on the Eastern Shore will start slowly after Labor Day. Like the cucumbers, heavy volume of snap beans will occur to the later side of the deal. Look for volume to increase after the week of September 10, and continue until frost. Growing conditions between now and mid-September will play a major role in the overall supply of snap beans. For the present, the prospects look excellent. There will be supplies of green, wax and flat beans available until the first killing frost. Acreage will be about the same as last year.

**CANTALOUPE:** The cantaloupe deal is winding down. Light shipments may continue for a week or so after Labor Day, but the deal is basically over. Yields and quality have both been excellent.

**CABBAGE:** Supplies of cabbage will be available late in the fall-- mid to late October.

**CUCUMBERS:** A few of the early fall fields were ready for harvest in late August, but the bulk of the deal will not begin until September 7-10. From that point, volume should increase and peak in early to mid October, and last until frost. Acreage is little changed from last year.

**PEPPERS:** Pepper acreage on the Eastern Shore appears to be about the same as last year. The summer harvest is complete. New fields should start coming in about mid-September. Some late acreage will be available in October and early November.

**POTATOES:** Limited supplies of red skin potatoes will be available, possibly by the end of the month.

**PUMPKINS:** As the popularity of this crop has increased so has grower interest. At this point the quality looks excellent and harvest should begin mid-September.

**SQUASH:** The harvest of green and yellow squash from the Eastern Shore has already begun, and quality is excellent. Expect supplies to continue until frost.

**SOUTHERN GREENS:** Limited supplies of collards, kale, mustard and other greens will be moving to market during the month.

**SWEET POTATOES:** Growers are reporting that harvest of the 2002 sweet potato crop will begin shortly after Labor Day. Shipments will be light as most table stock supplies will be going into storage for shipment later.

**TOMATOES:** The tomato deal has gone from a spring crop to a fall crop with peaks and valleys in each sector, to a deal that begins in June and runs until frost. The rising popularity of the roma's, cherries, and grapes has added to the popularity of the area as a great place to grow tomatoes. Quality has been and continues to be excellent. Expect harvest of all types of tomatoes to continue until frost.

**WATERMELONS:** Southeastern Virginia watermelon growers were all but finished with the summer harvest by the end of August and few if any supplies will be available in September.

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**BROCCOLI:** Growers planted in a timely fashion, but have to remain on tight irrigation schedules to deal with the hot and dry conditions that have prevailed over the area. The broccoli is planted under overhead irrigation so growers will be able to supply ample water if conditions become dry during September and October. There will have to be some rainfall to prevent too much saltwater intrusion up the rivers. Without it, growers will be prohibited from irrigating out of the rivers. Weather permitting, product should be available for market by mid October and continue through at least November. Both bunches and crowns will be packed in slush ice for shipping.

**CANTALOUPE:** Some very light harvest will continue through Labor Day but for all practical purposes the crop is done for the season.

**CUCUMBERS:** This is a moderate size crop for the area with most of it being grown on bare ground under overhead irrigation and the rest of it grown on black plastic with drip irrigation. Some light volume from the summer deal continues to be shipped from the area. The plants are a nice green color but need some consistent rainfall to carry them to maturity. Expect to see harvest tempo increase following Labor Day with shipments to continue until frost.

**EGGPLANT:** Commercial eggplant production is up to approximately 100 acres this year. Most of the crop is being grown on black plastic with drip irrigation. As the plants grew, they were staked and tied three times to enhance growth and to reduce incidence of disease problems. Harvest is underway in a light manner and will continue until frost.

**PEPPERS:** This crop becomes more and more important to the region. This year, growers have put in more acres of bell peppers. The crop is being grown on black plastic with trickle irrigation. Water has been the name of the game here and those growers that

ran out of water simply lost their crop. The summer fields are still being picked with growers packing large, extra large, jumbo, and chocolate pepper. Fall fields were set in white plastic with drip irrigation and have been staked and tied three times. Some plants dropped blossoms as a result of the extreme temperatures, which means that fall yields will probably be reduced. Fall harvest will begin following Labor Day and will continue well into October and possibly into November if growers experience a late frost.

**PUMPKINS:** Acreage is about steady with last year but expect yields to be reduced as a result of the extreme temperatures. Any fields that did not have irrigation were generally lost. Quite a few acres were planted on plastic with drip irrigation but expect yields to be reduced even in those fields as extreme temperatures caused blossoms to drop. Some pumpkins have begun to turn orange. Product should be available by the end of September or the first of October. There will be some large pumpkins available from the area that will average around 150 lbs.

**SNAPBEANS:** Commercial production of this crop is generally complete for this year.

**SQUASH:** Another major crop for the area. This year growers have available zucchini, yellow straight neck, and crooked neck. Some of the summer fields are still being picked. Again irrigation has been the key. Assuming weather conditions improve, growers should be picking the fall crop by Labor Day and continue until the first killing frost. Expect yields to be reduced.

**SWEET CORN:** Completed for the season.

**TOMATOES:** The Northern Neck has been notorious for the production of a terrific tasting tomato. The crop is grown under overhead irrigation or on plastic with drip irrigation and is picked as a vine ripe rather than a mature green. The summer crop harvest is still underway and will continue until Labor Day. Product is in variable condition as the vines were exposed to heavy rainfall during the month of August. However, fall plants were transplanted into white and black plastic with trickle irrigation and are coming along nicely. They have been staked and tied three times. Harvest of the fall crop will begin after Labor Day and continue through mid October and possibly into early November. Some fields were planted extremely late into black plastic with the hope that some plants may produce marketable product during late October and November.

**WATERMELON:** Some light volume will continue through Labor Day. Generally speaking, the product is in good condition and has good flavor.

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**PUMPKINS:** Approximately 100-150 acres planted. Due to dry conditions during planting, some growers are reporting poorer stands and a later crop than normal.

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Cabbage harvest has slowed due to dry weather. Organic vegetables available to buyers also – call for details.

**APPLES:** The rain and cooler temperatures will help with sizing and developing color. Growers in the region are still undecided about the size of the crop due to early season cold spells and in very limited areas, recent hail damage. Red and Golden apples are coming along very well at this time. Growers have lesser volumes of the later varieties, Romes and Staymans. These varieties are expected to come along good as the season progresses.

**PEACHES:** Well into the harvest.

**CABBAGE:** 500 acres. Harvest slowed down at this time due to hot weather. Pre – cooling capabilities available. Call for details.

**VINE RIPEN TOMATOES:** 50 acres. Well into the harvest at this time. Also available are varieties of organic tomatoes and grape tomatoes.

**BELL PEPPERS:** 20 acres. Well into harvest. Quality is good. Organic peppers available. Good Quality. Call for sources.

**PUMPKINS:** 1000 acres. Growers are reporting that yields are expected to be lighter due to the hot, dry weather conditions this summer. Minis and corn fodder available also.

**CUCUMBERS:** 20 acres. Long green and pickling cucumbers are available. Harvest has begun. Growers will have inventory of cucumbers through September.

**CHRISTMAS TREES** - The cold killing freeze earlier in the season will have an effect on supplies. Trees could be hard to locate this season. Call early.

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**APPLES:** Most growers have finished their harvest of Ginger Golds and are in the middle of picking Galas. The early reports are favorable for both varieties, with the taste being exceptional. Growers will begin shipping Ginger Golds and Galas within the next week. The start of the Golden Delicious harvest should begin the first of September, with Red Delicious starting the following week. The harvest dates of the later varieties will be determined as the season progresses. While the Central and Northwest growing areas have experienced unusually dry conditions, it has only enhanced the sweetness and taste of the apples. At this time, Virginia growers are anticipating a good harvest of crisp and flavorful fruit.

**PEACHES:** By the end of August, most shippers will be finished with peaches for this season.

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**BEANS:** As I write this section of our crop status report, we are receiving a nice, gentle rainfall, which is much needed in our area. The rainfall this week should allow for an additional late planting of fall crops including cabbage, collards, greens, and squash. Review the sections below and give us a call if you are looking for any particular item we have listed.

**BEANS:** Green beans continues to be harvested each week and will be available until frost, probably mid October. All are under irrigation and of the Cloudburst variety.

**PEPPERS:** The fifteen acres of Camelot green peppers have irrigation and will be harvested until frost, mid October.

**PUMPKINS:** Due to dry weather conditions this summer, our pumpkin crop is short but growers with irrigation have a nice looking crop with pumpkins turning color now. Several of these growers are looking for buyers so give us a call if you need small amounts of pumpkins. Varieties include Magic Lantern, Howden, Appalachian, Mammoth Gold, and Pro Gold 510. Pie pumpkins, mini pumpkins, and gourds are also available.

**SQUASH:** Small amounts of yellow, green, and fall squash have been planted for fall harvest.

**WATERMELONS:** Small amounts of watermelons will be available through September. Varieties include Regency, Sentinel, Mardi Gras, Carnival, and Millionaires.

**OTHER CROPS:** Collards, kale, and various greens have been planted and will be available throughout the fall.

**NOTE:** The Southeastern Virginia Farmers Market is located in Courtland, Virginia and has corn, bean, pepper, and melon lines. This facility has hydrocooling, forced air-cooling, refrigeration, grading and packing services, which are available for area growers use.

**This publication is updated monthly by the Office of Domestic Sales and Market Development from June through October. This Crop Status Report is also available on our Website at:**

**[www.vdacs.state.va.us/domestic](http://www.vdacs.state.va.us/domestic)**

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